

The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY
THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

VOL. X.

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No. 8

THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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"BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW."

So speaks to thee, O heart,
As the swift years depart,
The re-creating Voice.
Turn not in vain regret
To thy fond yesterdays,
But rather forward set
Thy face toward the untrodden ways.
Open thine eyes to see
The good in store for thee,—
New love, new thought, new service, too,
For Him who daily maketh thy life new.
Nor think there aught is lost
Or left behind upon the silent coast
Of thy spent years;
Give o'er thy faithless fears.
Whate'er of real good —
Of thought or deed or holier mood —
Thy life hath known
Abideth still thine own,
And hath within significance
Of more than Time's inheritance.
Thy good is prophecy
Of better still to be.
In the future thou shalt find
How far the Fact hath left behind
Thy fondest Dream; how, deeper than all sense
Or thought of thine, thy life's sure Providence!

—*F. L. Hosmer.*

SET THY HOUSE IN ORDER.

There was once a German nobleman who led a foolish and dissipated life, drinking, gambling, and neglecting his vassals, his family, and his affairs. He had a dream one night, which vividly impressed him. He saw a figure looking at him with serious face, and pointing to a dial where the hands marked the hour of four. The figure looked at him sadly, and said these words, "After Four!" and disappeared. The nobleman awoke in great terror, and thought that the vision foreboded his speedy death. What could it mean? It must mean that he was to die after four days. So he determined to set his house in order. He sent for the priest and confessed his sins, and received absolution. He sent for his family, and begged their forgiveness for his offences against them. He sent for his man of business, and arranged his affairs as well as he could. He then waited for death. The four days passed, and he did not die. He then thought that perhaps the vision meant that he was to die after four weeks. He had a longer time for preparation. So he devoted these four weeks to making atonement for all the evil he had [done in the world and doing all the good he could. The four weeks passed, and still he was alive. Then he thought it meant four months; and so he spent these four months in a more thorough repentance. He did all the good he could do in that time on his estates. He found out all the poor and the sufferers, and helped them. The four months passed, and he did not die. Then he said: "It is plain that the vision meant four years. I have four years to live. Let me do all the good I can in that time." So during that four years he gave all his thoughts and time to others, did all he could for his neighbors, his vassals, the

poor, and also took useful and honorable part in public affairs. At the end of four years, instead of dying, he was chosen Emperor of Germany, and became one of the best emperors that ever was elected. The expectation of death had taught him how to live. It was natural that it should do so.

If we should know that we had only four days, months, or years to live, we should, in like manner, very probably make an effort to improve our life, and to spend the time that remained to us in the best way.

For one thing, we should value more the time remaining to us, and try to use it to better purpose, if we knew that we had only a precise and definite quantity. *Now* it seems to us that we have an indefinite, therefore an unlimited quantity, and therefore that it is not necessary for us to be careful in the use of it.

The German nobleman of whom we have spoken thought he was preparing to die; but, in fact, he was preparing to live. He was setting his house in order, getting ready to live. And this is the point which is most worth our attention,—*the preparation necessary in order to live*. When one is dangerously sick, it is common for religious persons to inquire whether he is *prepared to die*. We feel, and feel rightly, that, before such a momentous change, it is important to be prepared. One wishes to arrange his affairs, to make his will, to take leave of his friends, to forgive his enemies, and to ask their forgiveness; to finish any work which he has begun; to leave some token of affection with those he loves; to do some good to those who depend on him, and whom he can help; lastly, to make his peace with God, and to give his heart, in prayer, submission, penitence, and faith, to the Almighty.

This is all natural and right. But all this would be better done if it were done while we live, and for the sake of life, not merely when we are about to die. Let us therefore see how we may set our house in order, that we may live.

This command is for all of us. God says to each of us to-day, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt live." Death is serious, but life more so. We have no responsibility about dying, but a great deal about living. When we die, we fall into the hands of

God, to go where he shall take us, to have what he shall give us, to be what he shall make of us. All we have to do is to wait and to receive. But, when we live, we take up our own work and have our own lot to choose. We fall into our *own* hands every morning, and that is far more alarming than to be in the hands of God.

When men are about to die, they begin by setting in order the *house of their affairs*. But they ought to do this when they are about to live.

One does not like to die and to leave his accounts unsettled, his papers in confusion, his letters unsorted, his property in an entangled state. Therefore, he sorts his papers, burns his letters or files them, makes his will, that there may be as little trouble for his executors as possible. This is right, no doubt. He ought to do it.

But why not do this in order to live? Why not do it to save *himself* trouble, to do all his work well and easily?

I like those persons who are their own executors,—who give away all they can while they are alive. Then they have the pleasure of seeing, themselves, the good their money does, and also the satisfaction of managing it themselves.

But, besides the house of the affairs, there is also the house of the thoughts to set in order. Many people wait till they are about to die before they think at all on the most important subjects of thought. Then into the confusion of a sick man's brain they try to introduce order and to arrange a creed. So we hear of death-bed conversions, from one creed to another, if the unfortunate patient falls into the hands of a proselyting minister. A Kentucky lady whom I knew went to New Orleans, and there died. But on her death-bed she sent for a Presbyterian minister, who, when he found that she was a Unitarian, began to talk to her about her opinions, and tried to convert her to his own. But she said: "I formed these views and came to these conclusions when I was well and strong. That was the right time to form them. This is no time to unsettle them. Let my opinions alone; but increase my faith, if you can. I believe in God. I wish to believe more entirely. I trust in Christ: I wish to trust in him more. Help me to repent, to submit, to love." So the good man put away his creed, and

prayed with her. She had set her house of thought in order while she was well, and in this she did wisely.

We need a clear and systematic belief to live by, not to die by. We need it to save us from hesitation and uncertainty, when the time of action comes. We need it to guide others who are in doubt, to see all events that occur in the holy light of Christianity, to see sorrow and trial glorified by a divine love, to *comprehend* with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God.

Then there is the house of the affections to be set in order, and this ought to be done while we live.

Many wait until they are about to die before they look into their heart to see what is there. Then they find how cold their love has been to their friends; how they have neglected opportunities of showing affection or good will; how, absorbed in selfish thoughts and pursuits, they have not thought of the happiness of others. In the stillness of the sick-chamber, as they look back, how empty their years seem of good! What return have they made for the exceeding love of parents, of husband, of wife, of brother and sister, of friends? Love has been showered on them like sunlight; but, as the sunlight falls on the inaccessible summit of some frozen Alpine peak, so it has fallen on their hearts, leaving them unmelted into any tenderness. "Oh," they cry, "if I could only set *this* house in order, if I could only have time to *love* as I ought those who have loved me so well! But it is too late now!" What bitterness is in that thought! But the bitterness is wholesome; and it often happens that the man who has been cold and hard through life softens in his last days, and in his sick-chamber, into an unspeakable tenderness and gentleness of spirit. And such is the nature of the human heart that these last hours of unproductive tenderness seem to atone for all the hard years that preceded them; and the wife and children remember him as he was in his dying-room, and say, "That was our father, that was his true life." But is it well to waste fifty years in cold, hard, self-folded indifference, and to set the house of the heart in order only when just about to go away? Would it not be better to have a little thoughtful love spread

over each day, a few kind words uttered every morning and every evening, some little acts of good will to refresh life all along its route? Would it not be well to fill one's life full of that which Wordsworth says constitutes the largest portion of a good man's life,—

"The little nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love"?

I know that the human heart is sometimes like the American aloe, which stands fifty years a dry dead stalk, and then springs up, and in a few days clothes itself with flowers. Let us be thankful for that, if we can have no more. But in the parable of the talents we are taught that the good servants were those who used their Lord's money so that it was increasing *all the time they had it*, and not merely during the few hours which preceded his return.

We also need to set in order the house of the spirit. This preparation, more than any other, is apt to be left to the hour of death. Men about to die bethink them of "making their peace with God," and turn to religion. Then, for the first time, they remember that they are sinners, and ask for pardon. Then, first, they feel their own weakness, and pray for help. It is good to do so. It is good to pass through this experience *then*, if one has never had it before.

But how much better it is to set in order the house of the spirit all through our life! Religion, true religion, is to help us to *live* nobly, truly, generously. It is to enable us to perform every-day duties faithfully, to endure common trials patiently. When Jesus said, "The tree is known by its fruits," and gave this as a test by which to distinguish true teachers from false ones, he referred to fruits which could be known in this life, else his warning and test would be useless. According to this, he is a true teacher of Christianity whose doctrine enables men to lead good lives here, not he who merely gives them a ticket by which they may be enabled to enter heaven hereafter. We need religion, we need the sense of a divine presence and a divine love, to enable us to be true and faithful in this world. We need forgiveness for this life, not for the life to come.

Let us, then, set our house in order, that

we may live!—the house of our affairs, that we may act efficiently and usefully; the house of our thoughts, that we may see clearly what to do and how to do it; the house of our affections, that we may shed warm sunshine around us on all the hearts near us; the house of our soul, that, being led by God and inspired by him, we may have his peace in our souls evermore, and live his eternal life.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

THE STILL HOUR.

WHILE WE MAY.

The hands are such dear hands:
They are so full, they turn at our demands
So often, they reach out
With trifles scarcely thought about
So many times, they do
So many things for me, for you,—
If their fond wills mistake,
We may well bend, not break.
They are such fond, frail lips
That speak to us. Pray if love strips
Them of discretion many times,
Or if they speak too slow or quick, such crimes
We may pass by; for we may see
Days not far off when those small words may be
Held not as slow or quick or out of place, but
dear
Because the lips are no more here.

They are such dear familiar feet that go
Along the path with ours,—feet fast or slow,
And trying to keep pace,—if they mistake
Or tread upon some flower that we would take
Upon our breast, or bruise some reed,
Or crush poor hope until it bleed,
We may be mute,
Nor turning quickly to impute
Grave fault; for they and we
Have such a little way to go, can be
Together such a little while along the way,
We will be patient while we may.

So many little faults we find!
We see them, for not blind
Is love. We see them; but, if you and I
Perhaps remember them some by and by,
They will not be
Faults then—grave faults—to you and me,
But just odd ways,—mistakes, or even less,
Remembrances to bless.
Days change so many things,—yes, hours:
We see so differently in suns and showers.
Mistaken words to-night
May be so cherished by to-morrow's light.
We may be patient, for we know
There's such a little way to go. — *Independent.*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[Send all offers and requests for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.]

OFFERS.

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty." Address Miss Langmaid, 373 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.?

The following books are offered by the Springfield Branch. Address Miss Clara D. Hoar, care of Samuel Bowles, Crescent Hill, Springfield, Mass.

Otto's "German Grammar"; "German and English Conversations"; Goethe's "Faust for Students"; Ahn's "First German Reader"; "Studien und Plaudereien"; Swinton's "English Grammar"; Collier's "English Literature"; Wood's "Fourth Reader" (Natural History); Allen and Greenough's "Latin Grammar"; Sadler's "Exercises for translating into French"; "French Anecdotes and Questions"; "French and English Conversations."

The following books are offered by the Cambridge Branch. Address Miss M. A. Vinal, 20 Lowell Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Old correspondents will please address the members to whom they have formerly written. In order to receive books from the Cambridge Branch, it will be necessary henceforth to send a reference with the first request.

Educational.

"How Plants behave," Gray; Youmans's "First Book of Botany"; "Methods of Study in Natural History," Agassiz; "Science Primers"; "Astronomy and Physical Geography"; Guyot's "Physical Geography"; Mitchell's "Atlas"; Swinton's "Grammar School Geography"; "Primer of Ethics," Conegys; "General Sketch of History," Freeman; "Manual of Ethics," Mackenzie.

Miscellaneous.

Thackeray's "Miscellanies"; "Familiar Letters from Europe"; "Persecutions of the Huguenots in France"; Tennyson's "May Queen"; "China Painting"; Mrs. H. B. Stowe's "Religious Poems"; "The Divine Tragedy," Longfellow; "Young People's Bible History"; "Antonius," "Herodias," "Salome," dramatic poems by Heywood;

Library Magazine (four volumes, 1879-1880); "X-rays," Gail Hamilton; "The Citizen and the Neighbor," Dole; Weiss's "Life of Theodore Parker"; "Hygiene of the Nursery"; "Lectures to Young Women"; "Pear Culture"; *New England Magazine*, 1900; *Atlantic Monthly*, 1900; the *Forum*, 1899; *Musical Magazine*.

The following books are offered by the Second Church Branch, Salem. Address Miss Decker, 4 Mt. Vernon Street, Salem, Mass. First requests must be accompanied by reference.

"Lotus Time in Japan," Finck; "A Capital Courtship," Alix Black; "Mother Goose for Grown Folks," A. D. T. Whitney; "A Strange Recluse," L. L. A. Very; "How to listen to Music," H. C. Krehbiel; "Crit-tenden," J. Fox; "A Dog of Flanders"; "Treasure Island," R. L. Stevenson; "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush"; "A Fashionable Sufferer," A. Hoppin; "Three Vassar Girls in England"; "Three Vassar Girls in Russia and Turkey"; *Wide awake*, volumes xxvi., xxvii., xxx., xxxi.; "Brown Book of Boston," vols. i., ii. The magazines are unbound.

Books offered by Marlboro Branch. Address Miss Della M. Frye, Pleasant Street, Marlboro, Mass.

Educational.

Prince's "Arithmetic" in Grades I. to VIII.; "Complete Arithmetic" (16); "Business Arithmetics and Book-keeping" (5); "School Singing Books"; "Plane and Solid Geometry," Wentworth; "Readers," Grades III., IV., V., VI.; "Primers"; "Grammars," Common School and Advanced; Wells's "Natural Philosophy"; "General History," Anderson; "General History," Sheldon; "United States History," Thomas; "United States History," Leeds; "United States History," Campbell; "War of Independence," Fiske; "Physiology, Elementary" (3); "Advanced Physiology" (2); "Vocal and Physical Training"; "Light Gymnastics"; "Natural Philosophy," Gillet and Rolfe; "Fourteen Weeks in Physics," Steele; "Fourteen Weeks in Chemistry," Steele; "Spellers" (4); "Latin Reader," Harkness; "Introductory Geography," Swinton; "Elements of Astronomy," Lockyer; "Introduction to French Authors," Van Daell; Cæsar's "Commentaries"; "Free-hand Draw-

ing," Smith; "Primary Lessons in Drawing," Cross; "Mechanical Drawing," Cross; "Mechanical Drawing," Rouillion; "Teacher's Manual of Drawing," Prang.

Children's.

"History of the United States," Goodrich; "Natural History of Selborne," White; "Cat Tales"; "Playtime"; "Story Book for Babies"; "Afternoon Tea" (rhymes); "The Easy Book"; "Home for the Holidays"; "Æsop's Fables"; "Book of Cats and Dogs"; "Nursery Jingles"; "Little Anna's Trials"; "Book of Short Stories"; "Elementary Natural History."

Bible (fine print); "Translation of the Gospel with Notes," Folsom; "Gospel Hymns," No. 2, Bliss and Sankey; Writing Books; Drawing Books; Pamphlet Cook Books.

Fiction.

"Rose in Bloom," "Hospital Sketches," "Eight Cousins," Alcott; "A Tale of Two Cities," "Oliver Twist" (pamphlets), "Little Dorrit," Dickens; "Master and Man," Tolstoi; "Tirzah Ann's Summer Trip," by Josiah Allen's Wife; "In His Steps"; "Tom Thumb's Trip around the World"; "Twice Told Tales," Hawthorne; "Cape Cod Folks," McLean; "Treasure Island," Stevenson; "Armored of Lyonesse," "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," Besant; "Uncle Tom's Cabin"; "Ivanhoe." "Pictures of the World's Fair"; "Photos of the World."

The following books are offered by the Portsmouth Branch. Address Miss L. V. Sise, 3 Court Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire:—

"Kith and Kin," Jessie Fothergill; "A Window in Thrums," "Auld Licht Idyls," Barrie; "Looking Glass for the Mind"; "Cricket on the Hearth," "Old Curiosity Shop," "Hard Times," Dickens; "Tracts"; Short Stories; "The Wreath"; "Which is the Wiser," Mary Howitt; "Thoughts in Affliction," Rev. A. S. Thelwall; "Stories of the Shorter Catechism," A. Todd; "The Still Hour," Austin Phelps; "Gardener's Text-book," Schenck; "Short Stories from the German," translated; "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia"; "Letter to School-boys," John Schrimpton; "Darkness and Daylight in New York," Helen Campbell; "The Poultry Book," Bennett; "Globe Treasury of

Universal Knowledge"; "Love and Shawl-straps," Annette L. Noble; "In Varying Moods," Beatrice Harraden; "Popular Tales," Maria Edgeworth; "Fire Brigade," R. M. Ballantyne; "A Little Pilgrim," Mrs. Oliphant; "Sir Roger de Coverley"; "Surly Tim, and Other Stories," Frances Hodgson Burnett; "Stories and Sights of France and Italy," Grace Greenwood; "Romance of a Poor Young Man," Octave Feuillet; "A Crooked Path," "The Wooing o't," Mrs. Alexander; "The Orange Girl," Walter Besant; "Water Babies," Charles Kingsley; "Scottish Chiefs," Jane Porter; "The Newcomes," Thackeray; "Reassuring Hints," Henry Footman; "In the Dozy Hours," Agnes Repplier; "Inside our Gate," C. C. Brush; "Contemporary Spain," M. W. Plummer; "About People," Kate Gannett Wells; "Washington, a National Epic," E. J. Runk; "Total Eclipse of the Sun," M. L. Todd; "Many Inventions," Kipling; "Choy Susan," W. H. Bishop; "Mate of the Daylight," Sarah Orne Jewett; "Christmas Hours"; "Columbia's Emblem"; "Parent's Assistant," Maria Edgeworth; "Red-letter Days," Gail Hamilton; "Story of Himself," Mary H. Maxwell; "Self-cultivation," Grace Taylor; "Home Sunshine," Catharine D. Bell; "Vacation Story Books"; "Derrick Vaughan," Edna Lyall; "Religious Souvenir"; "Merry's Museum," 1851 to 1865; "Memoir of Rev. Dr. Judson," Wayland; "Memoir of Mary L. Ware," Edward B. Hall; "Les Provinciales" (French), Pascal; "Sacred Dramas," Hannah More; Byron's "Works," 1 vol.; "Sabbath Bells"; "Sesame and Lilies," Ruskin; "The Garden"; "Class-book of Botany," Alfonso Wood; "Fourth Music Reader"; "Rhetorical Reader," Porter; "Public Health Problems," J. F. J. Sykes; "American First Class Book"; "History of France," Barnes; "How Plants grow," Gray; "First Book of Botany," Eliza A. Gowmans; "Bacteria and their Products," Simes Woodhead; "Littérature Française" (French); "French Grammar," Levizacs; "Andrews's "Sallust"; Moore's "Virgil"; Anthon's "Cicero"; Comstock's "Chemistry."

Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., offers back numbers of *American Architects' Magazine*, *Popular Science Monthly*, *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*.

Mrs. James S. Howe, 26 Chestnut Street, Brookline, Mass., offers the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*.

REQUESTS.

[Read direction at beginning of Book Club before writing.]

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

Those who write to us for the first time must send the name and address of a minister as a reference. Without that the request will not be printed.

Mrs. H. R. Deyoe, Avon Park, De Soto County, Florida, would be glad to receive some good books. She can obtain newspapers and some periodicals, but no books.

Mrs. Mattie T. Clark, Stuart, Patrick County, Virginia, would like any of the following books: Meyer's "General History," "Stepping Heavenward," Marion Harland's works (except "Moss-side" and "Alone"), T. S. Arthur's works.

Dear Friends,—It has been a long time since I wrote to *The Cheerful Letter* friends, and also since I heard from any of you. Why do you not write? I miss the letters so much, though I have little time to write and am very tired now, having done two large washings to-day and expect to do two more to-morrow. This is the way we make our living. I generally do from three to six each week, usually 50 cents for each one. I can do this and also care for the family. It is work I like in nice weather, though I dread the cold winter days. It has been snowing to-day. We have had such fine autumn weather we ought not complain of the few stormy days. I would be glad if some one could send us the *Youth's Companion* after reading. We miss it so much. Have not received it for several months now. Also *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Harper's Bazar*, *Munsey*, or any of the magazines.

I would like to name two or three books, hoping some one may have one of them to send to me: "Hugh Wynne," by Mitchell; "D'ri and I," by Bacheller; "Uncle Terry," by Charles C. Munn. Stanley, my eldest boy (almost 12 years), is now taking lessons on the piano. I pay for them by washing for the teacher's family. He would be very glad to receive any easy music for piano.

My little daughter Edith wishes to thank you for the birthday remembrances sent her, especially the one sending basket and toys. We could not make out the name on the package. Forgive me for such a long letter. Truly, Senie Murphy, Box 77, Chesterhill, Morgan County, Ohio.

I have been getting *The Cheerful Letter* for several months, and enjoy it so much. I am writing now to know if some of the club members will send me some books or magazines to while away the lonely hours this winter. I love dearly to read, but cannot afford to buy reading matter. With a heart full of gratitude for those who will kindly remember me this winter. Mary Waller Dickinson, Za, Orange County, Virginia.

Dear Cheerful Letter Friends,—The time has come for me to drop out of the ranks for a while, and I wish to say a kind *thank you* to all who have sent reading to me in the past. It has brought sunshine, cheer, and brightness in my sad and darkened life. But now I cannot read so much, and I ask that my name be dropped for a time and let some other have the reading. When I get stronger, I'll send in a request. I ask my own dear pen friends to write to me as formerly, if they will. I thank all for their kindness. No one but those who are shut in as I know how much good the *Cheerful Letter* Mission is. I am so nervous and weak that I cannot read as formerly. Thanking one and all again and again and yet again, I wish to have *The Cheerful Letter* sent me as formerly, if it can be so. And I sincerely thank the one who has made it possible for me to have it all these years. Your interested friend and loving sister in His Name. Sadie V. Engell, Seaward, New York.

Of course, I do not expect to receive all these books, but these are my wants: a

book of "Synonyms," Barrett Wendell's "English Composition," or Genung's "Rhetoric," and Baldwin's "Fourth" or "Fifth Reader."

I never leave my chair except for my bed. I suffer much of the time. In my new home among strangers I feel quite alone and far away.

I am going to study a little this winter if I can.

The puzzle department in *The Cheerful Letter* is very interesting. I am quite a puzzle solver.

Miss Carlton kindly sends me the *Outlook* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Both are interesting and helpful. (Mrs.) Mary Keech, Hull, Sioux County, Iowa.

Miss Nina L. Watson, Ansonville, North Carolina, asks for the *Youth's Companion*.

Miss Alice Rogers, Pedlar Mills, Virginia, asks for the *New England Magazine*.

Miss Lucie Harris, McKenney, Virginia, would like to obtain some supplementary reading for the children whom she teaches.

Mrs. Alice Adkisson, Robert Lee, Texas, Box 86, will be glad to receive "Dora Thorne" by Charlotte M. Braeme, "Gipsy Blair," and other books. Also the address of the lady who writes to her, and signs I. H. N.

Miss Annie L. Philips, Holcomb's Rock, Bedford County, Virginia, has received no books and very few papers for over a year. She is teaching school in the country, entirely separated from any kind of circulating library or literary institution, and would be very glad indeed of any of the magazines and any of the newer standard books, also any of Marryat's novels.

Any books sent to her are always lent to a number of other people, and they give very much pleasure and real help.

Dear Cheerful Letter People,—Please accept sincere gratitude for the books and other literature sent me.

It has been said that the golden streets of heaven are paved with the "star-dust" of good deeds. The noble work you are doing has given the brightest of that "star-dust," besides proving that there is a helpful spirit in true Christianity which, if put in actual practice, would make even this world an

Eden. A lonely, crippled, and almost entirely helpless invalid so completely shut in and isolated from the world as I am, can appreciate, and needs such favors far more than those having a family of loved ones around them, to give companionship and cheer. With the exception of my husband I am all alone in the world; and, as we live in an isolated place, with rarely a passer-by, I am driven nearly wild with the dreary silence and loneliness, as I have always been accustomed to city life.

My husband does all the work of the house as well as outside, so I am left alone in my room most of the day.

As some of you know, we were financially ruined by the collapse of a colony boom here, "land-sharks," frosts, and barren sand being the cause.

I have been suffering for fifteen years from an incurable form of rheumatism, that has enlarged, twisted, and drawn out of shape nearly every joint in my body. I am never for a moment free from pain. My arms are too painfully crippled to let me hold a book, so my husband has made a fine book-holder.

An ancient Greek called books "the medicine of the mind;" and I am sure, if it had not been for the relief given me by the books sent by your people, I would have gone insane with the loneliness and my intense pain. I am more than ever dependent on reading now, as I have become so worn and nervous. I must keep my mind off my pain and surroundings.

I have passed on a large amount of reading, not even a sermon is lost. I still have a large number of paper-covered books, which I will gladly send any one sending me the postage.

I am prompted to write this because I have received so few books during the past six months that I fear I am forgotten except by a very few, for whose continued kindness I am deeply grateful. Please do not forget me. Cordially yours, Mrs. E. A. J. Goodell, Avon Park, De Soto County, Florida.

I have moved from Ryan, Indian Territory, to Navaho, Oklahoma Territory, and would be glad if the Cheerful Letter friends would continue to send me reading. We have been here one week, and I have not yet

seen a woman. We are near the Wichita Mountains, and in a very lonely and out-of-the-way place. My husband is away at work from morning until night. I get so very lonely, anything to read would be a great pleasure. Please also send reading to my mother, Mrs. A. M. Chitwood, Atoka, Indian Territory. She has three boys and three girls. Very sincerely, Mrs. L. L. Burton.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

[Contributions for this department may be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, 26 Chestnut Street, Brookline, Mass.]

MAKE THEM HAPPY.

Whom should we make happy? Our children, of course.

Make home attractive, fathers and mothers, and keep the boys and girls under the home roof by being a boy and girl with them. Enter into their amusements, furnish them with some occupation, or several occupations if need be, in which they take an especial interest. Know the companions and playmates of your children. If John or Mary introduces into the family circle a stranger, do not look cross and wish they would cease bringing home strange children. A kind word and a bright smile is much better, and will go far toward making your own boy and girl happy. Enter into conversation with the strange child; find out, in a gentle manner, who and what he is. Watch him, unobserved, at his play; and very soon you will be able to determine whether or not the child is a fit associate for your own children.

If home amusements are furnished to our children and their young friends, we shall soon discover they have not the desire to be almost anywhere but in their own homes.

More particularly is agreeable occupation needed for the long evenings of winter, and many are the ways of providing pleasure for the children as well as parents.

The piano is a source of unfailing pleasure in the home. All ages can gather around it, and a pleasant evening may be passed in musical pastime.

It is desirable to encourage boys to learn music,—the piano, violin, bass-viol, cornet, or vocal music: it matters not which it may

be, so long as they are brought under the refining influence of musical culture. To boys who are fond of music, it is no hardship to pass their leisure hours in this eminently social and domestic manner. I would not in this connection force children, boy or girl, to try to cultivate what is not in them. There is a proper limitation to all things; and it would be useless to engage in a persistent, serious, and profound study to attain to any degree of excellence, if lacking in a natural affinity for music. The intelligent practice of singing, however, is a great developer of the lungs, doing much to strengthen the pulmonary apparatus, expand the chest, and give room for the full play of the vital organs around it. Glee clubs and evenings set apart for choral union singing are intensely interesting to most children, and through their fascinating influence tend to divert the mind from more gross and exhausting pursuits.

Dancing must next be considered, principally from a health standpoint. At the present day there are but few people who object to moderate dancing. What is dancing but a mere rhythmic hopping up and down, posing, and balancing, which, unquestionably, develops the muscular system of the back and lower limbs, expands the lungs, and starts the blood to moving vigorously? As a physical exercise, it cannot but be looked upon with favor: as to pleasure, it is the bodily expression of intense joyous feeling. We have viewed dancing in its favorable light, let us now take up its objectionable points: first, the obnoxious late evening parties, with their risk from exposure; second, the evening supper, at an unaccustomed hour, formed of materials to tempt the palate and degenerate the stomach, and, through sympathy, the whole physical system; third, the carelessness of parents in allowing delicate children, or those with a severe cold, to attend dancing lessons without a watchful care being placed over them; fourth, the indiscriminate mingling of sexes, the pure with the impure, the modest with the immodest, and so on. When the evils here referred to are not allowed to exist, dancing, without excess, can injure no one. An occasional private dancing party in the home, closing at a reasonable hour, is a pleasure to young and old alike. The mind and body demand

exercise; and the stimulus of preparation for and attending such festivities has its benefit, which should not be ignored.

Cards are another source of amusement. It is difficult to understand why there is so much opposition to the harmless social domestic amusement of playing cards. Is it because there are gamblers? Are there not gamblers in a speculative way as well? And might we not, with the same propriety, remove all money from the sight or touch of our children for fear of temptation in its use? Cards, to many, are the most engrossing of amusements. If the youth is encouraged in card-playing at home, he will not care to surreptitiously indulge in card-playing away from home. It is a fact that often the greatest attraction of card-playing seems to arise from the novelty and fascination of stealing away to some hiding-place, in company with others, to indulge in the game.

According to the common usages of society, we and our children must conform to the manners of the world around us, or we shall be deemed singular and our children proclaimed as odd. We, perhaps, should not mind this; but our children may be made unhappy thereby, and it is the duty of all parents to make each child within their household as happy as possible.

To insure the physical health of your child is to attend to the moral health, and this may be attained by making the home attractive. This will cost but a small effort; but that effort must be made earnestly and kindly, and we shall find our reward in the happiness of our children.—*Alice L. Root, M.D., in Babyhood.*

NATURAL HISTORY.

LICHENS AND MOSSES.

The smooth bark of our trees is the home of a large class of humble plants known as lichens. If any of you examine the logs in the wood-box, you will find many of them completely covered with grayish or greenish patches of lichens, so that the bark itself is almost hidden.

Pitch pine is so rough and ragged that they cannot obtain a foothold; but oak, maple, and beech are rarely without them. There is one very common on the trees of

New England, which is a bright yellow, looking like a yellow leaf firmly joined to the bark. In the centre are numerous little cups about the size of a pin-head, which are called the fruit. It is unfortunate that there is no common name for this plant. The botanists call it *Theloschistes*, and in some places, especially along the coast, the trunks of trees are fairly golden with it. Another very common variety is known as the *Parmelia*, and has a peculiar light-green leaf, growing in patches several inches across on trees and old stone walls. On this the fruit is larger and dark chestnut in color. On the branches of old trees in the woods are often seen masses of long, grayish-green threads, which wave in the wind and look like an old man's beard. This is a lichen, though often called a moss, and is named *Usnea*. Sometimes small pieces of it are found still clinging to the wood in the wood-box. But lichens grow on the ground as well as on trees and rocks. In dry pastures and barren fields the earth is frequently covered with the Reindeer moss, so called, because in the north of Europe, where it grows abundantly, it is eaten by the reindeer. It is very nearly the color of the *Usnea*, and is several inches high, branching in every direction. When wet, it is easily bent, but is very brittle when dry. It belongs to a large family of lichens called *Cladonia*; and, if you examine carefully the tips of the branches, you will find the little brown masses known as the fruit. There is one *Cladonia* which must be familiar to every one. Its slender stems, about an inch high, are tipped with bright scarlet heads, which make the gray rocks and old stumps around which they cluster bright and gay with the rich color. The stems often end in cups bearing the red fruit on the edges. On that account it has been called Red Cup Moss. Search among old decaying stumps, and you will surely find this lichen, looking like a cluster of green pins with red heads, thickly set in the earth. Sometimes on the sides of a rock a curious lichen is found, brown on top and black beneath, joined to the rock by a short stem, but hanging like a piece of old leather, loose and ragged. I have seen them as large as half a page of commercial note paper. This is the *Umbilicaria*. There is a smaller, thinner one which loves the sunlight, and is often very abun-

dant on old boulders and bare rocks. Brown on the top and lighter beneath, it is covered with little projections like pustules, and hence named the *Umbilicaria pustulata*. Lichens are the hardiest of all plants. They are more abundant in the colder climates, and are found nearer the pole than any other kind of plant. In fact, they rather like cold weather, and always grow more plentifully on the north side of trees and rocks than on the south, so that wanderers in the woods have often found the points of compass by this means. They are not injured by the intense heat of the sun in summer. They simply dry up and wait till rainy or damp weather, when they suck in the moisture and begin to grow again. On this account they are very long lived.

If we take a *Parmelia*, we find a thick, tough leaf, called by botanists the thallus, which clings to the tree or stone. Growing up from the leaf-like, tiny toadstools are the cups which contain the seeds, or rather what correspond to the seeds in flowering plants. The seeds are so very small that they cannot be seen except by the aid of a strong microscope.

J. P. A.

The fresh-water sponges and polyzoa produce at the beginning of winter a great many little seed-like bodies, which, when the parent animals die, sink to the bottom of the water, and in the spring are all ready to open and produce the little animals. Some of these "winter-eggs" are curiously surrounded with stout grappling-hooks, which serve as anchors.

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[Contributions to this column may be sent to Miss K. C. Porter, 22 Brimmer Street, Boston, Mass.]

1.

One word is concealed in each sentence. When these fourteen words are rightly guessed and placed one below and then in the order here given, the initials will spell the name of a famous author and the finals one of his best known books.

1. Alec approves of it all.
2. Had Jim his hat on yesterday?
3. I am going to a lecture.
4. Did you see the plaster of Paris Katy-did on the high shelf?

5. Ethel owes me ten dollars.
6. He lies down all day—they say.
7. The sum actually amounted to four thousand pounds.
8. This task I find irksome to a great degree.
9. I will make Jim pay up at once.
10. When he came, Ralph went out to meet him.
11. Take Ephraim home.
12. I wish I could see a gleam of sunshine.
13. Make those lines connect around that point.
14. Which do you like best,—to sail or steam up the broad Hudson?

(*St. Nicholas.*)

II.

Subtraction.

Example. Take fifty from a girdle and leave a wager? Answer. b-e-l-t—bet.

The subtracted letter is not always in the middle of the word.

1. Subtract fifty from stop, and leave an article of apparel.
2. Subtract five hundred from funny, and leave a kind of biscuit.
3. Subtract fifty from a jewel, and leave a fruit.
4. Subtract fifty from a small basin, and leave a weapon.
5. Subtract five hundred from scarcity, and leave a planet.
6. Subtract one thousand from something worn by a person who fences, and leave to question.

(*St. Nicholas.*)

III.

I am composed of sixty letters, and my whole is a motto for December 25.

- My 13, 53, 26, 18, is not water.
- My 2, 10, 48, 51, 30, is one of the senses.
- My 5, 38, 43, 22, is to get up.
- My 1, 3, 36, 47, is pain.
- My 18, 31, 45, 17, 22, is a bee.
- My 19, 25, 17, 55, 57, is what we all want.
- My 34, 52, 39, 58, is a flower.
- My 4, 6, 39, 8, 24, 60, 15, is a narrative of past events.
- My 32, 33, 31, 40, 50, 17, 59, 8, 29, is what we all like to be.
- My 27, 28, 20, 12, 40, 47, 60, is a division of a book.
- My 44, 42, 9, 29, 13, is an animal.

- My 46, 16, 11, 51, 22, 37, is a director.
- My 49, 14, 21, 22, a form of cooking.
- My 41, 10, 2, is a small carpet.

IV.

My first is nothing but a name,
My second is still less.
My whole shall ever nameless be,
And now my riddle guess.

V.

In a minute a lady will double me,
To pack in a trunk or a bureau;
But a sailor takes hours to double me
On the way from New York to West Tauro.

Answers to Puzzles in December Number.

- I. Three slucks.
- II. Ram-rod.
- III. A thorn in the foot.
- IV. Light gains make heavy purses.
- V. *Charade*: The letter H.

Conundrums.

1. Because *U* can never come until after *T*.
2. When the Serf rises to the Pier.
3. Coat of Paint.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

Elsie J. Hurd, from South Acton, Maine, to 75 Johnson Street, Lynn, Mass. (Miss Hurd enjoys *The Cheerful Letter*, and hopes still to receive it.)

Mrs. F. E. Briggs, from Tekoa, Wash., to 748 First Street, Portland, Oregon.

Miss Minnie Rowland, Mt. Gilead, North Carolina, to Biscoe, North Carolina.

A request for a French paper has been sent to Miss Alice Macomber, Framingham, Mass. Miss Macomber has mislaid the writer's address. Will she kindly send it again, that she may receive the paper?

To Mrs. Martha W. Guy: Your letter might have been printed, had it been addressed to the Book Club Secretary.

Those who desire to have correspondents are reminded that they must apply to our secretary, Miss Langmaid, giving, as usual, the address of a minister as reference.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.

OBJECTS.

1. To cheer and comfort the lonely and discouraged — not only invalids, but all who need cheer and comfort — by the interchange of letters and by gifts of books and periodicals.

2. To supply in some measure to young people in remote places the lack of schools, by gifts of school-books, letters, and, for those who desire it, correspondence classes on history, the natural sciences, and other interesting branches of study. If any desire to join such classes, they may send their names to our secretary.

3. Also to supply, to some extent, the lack of a church. One good sermon or sermon extract is printed in each number of the paper. These sermons are never doctrinal, but practical, and intended to cheer and comfort the sorrowful and aid in giving a vital religion without regard to sect or creed.

4. An important part of our mission is to mothers of young families, who feel the importance of their sacred charge and are anxious to learn all that can be known to make of their children good, upright, useful men and women,—good citizens of the country,—for which we must all work together if we would make it fulfil its mission among the nations of the world and to the races of mankind. We give books on subjects connected with the training of children, and our columns are open (in our "Mothers' Council") to all who have questions to ask or interesting suggestions to make on topics important to mothers.

TRAVELLING LIBRARIES.

The Travelling Libraries have now become an important part of Cheerful Letter work. In order that this department may be thoroughly organized and systematized, Miss Louise Brown, 79 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass., has kindly consented to take it in charge. Will those interested in these libraries, and desiring information, kindly address Miss Brown as above?

The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times.—
Psalms lxxii. 7, 8.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

The address of our treasurer for the winter months is Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass.

Please send requests for reading matter to the Book Club Secretary, not to the Editor.

There will be a meeting of the Cheerful Letter Exchange on Friday, January 3, at 25 Beacon Street, 10.30 A.M. All interested in this work, whether members or not, are cordially invited.

Those who send contributions of any sort to the Cheerful Letter must have them sent in by or before the fifth of the month if they are to be inserted in the next issue.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

DIRECTIONS.

EDITOR,—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Bertha Langmaid, 373 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.

SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals should be sent to the treasurer, also all changes of address and requests for discontinuance. The subscription is fifty cents a year. If subscribers do not receive the paper regularly, they are requested to notify Miss Howe at once.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Louise Howe, as above. Please give full name and address. Also send name of minister as reference. Some of our members take the paper in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.